

House Bill - HB0171

State of Maryland - House Committee on Environment & Transportation

Respected Councilmembers,

I am Brian Flores, a Montgomery County native and Walt Whitman Alumni. In 2011, my business partner, Ryan Walter (also a Whitman graduate), and I founded The Compost Crew, a Montgomery County based small business that is committed to the effective and efficient management of our organic waste and create compost based products that improve our soils and environment. Over the past five years, we have collected more than 1 million pounds of organics and delivered them to be composted. Most recently we have made investments to begin using our valuable feedstock to manufacture several premium compost based products.

It is with this background that we are excited about the steps that the State is taking towards addressing the issue of yard waste, food residuals and other organics with meaningful initiatives that may bring about real improvement. A mandate to develop a study on the diversion and infrastructure of those materials to more properly and effectively manage them is so vital to our state's economic, environmental, and social sustainability. As a small business in this industry and operating in the state we want to be supported in our efforts and considered as a part of the solution for the state.

Composting will create jobs. Not through the inefficient processing and transportation of the feed-stock and products (those will be refined to be super-efficient to cut down on costs), but through the value created from manufacturing valuable products. Products whose economic and environmental value surpasses that of the energy and limited products created from an incineration or anaerobic digestion process that additionally leaves sterile and even toxic bi-products. Most concerns are all predicated upon poorly managed facilities and programs. When done properly, composting facilities are sustainable and are boons to the local economy and environment, without the negative aspects that come with disposal facilities sometimes wrongly associated with composting facilities.

On that note, we urge the State to ensure that there is infrastructure of a variety of scales for composting across the State and that we rely primarily on our own, in State, infrastructure to process our food scraps This will allow for greater control of product, stability of operations, and direct economic benefit for our community. Composting should seen as a way to improve upon our State's industries, land, and communities. The State should look to encourage the proper use of compost based products for agricultural, water safety, and domestic uses to help alleviate the dependence or necessity of using chemical based landcare products. We look for the State to facilitate

the diversion of organics, creation of compost based products and the sale and use of those products and services through supportive legislation and clear regulations. The Fertilizer Laws in the State should not hinder the connections between the users of a finished compost based product and its producers, but encourage and educate on best practices. Currently the state's law limits the use of any fertilizer with Phosphorus from being applied which will cause a detrimental disconnect between users and producers of compost based products. The properties of compost based products, vs chemical based, should be strongly considered when studying their impacts. Nutrients in compost based products is slow released into the soil over months or years. However, chemical based products release their nutrients much more quickly causing damaging environmental impact.

We also recommend that the State consider providing tax incentives, including related to carbon tax credits for compost production and use as both contribute significantly to the reduction of net CO₂ in our atmosphere through carbon sequestration and the reduction of demand on synthetic fertilizers and other unsustainable land management practices.

Finally, The Compost Crew will offer and would be honored to be included in any further discussion, to provide our insight from experiences in working in Montgomery County on this problem for the last five years, as well as to ensure that our strategy as a business is aligned with the County's goals and strategy.

Thank you very much for your time.

Ryan Walter

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